

IUT de Valence

IUT de Valence saves time and money with Micro Focus VM Explorer. The institute automates the backup and replication processes of more than 30 machines.

Overview

Based in Valence, France, and part of the Université Grenoble Alpes (UGA, or the University of Grenoble), the Institut Universitaire de Technologie (IUT, or University Institute of Technology) has 200 full- and part-time teachers and 30 administrative staff delivering an advanced learning experience to 1,300 students in 19 specialties. From undergraduate studies to master's degrees, IUT's curriculum covers everything from IT and computer science to business and management.

"VM Explorer is an excellent product that fulfills both our varying technology needs and our constrained institutional budget. Considering how much more flexible and reactive we have become since implementing it, the new system has more than paid for itself."

DAVID CHECHAT

IT Technician
IUT de Valence

Challenge

Managing a Complex Technological Environment

IUT's Information Technology (IT) department develops, secures, and maintains multiple student-facing applications (personal storage space, email addresses, an intranet, and a web sharing platform) as well as various internal management applications (administration, human resources, and tests and scores). With five staff members, the department supervises a complex technology environment comprising over 450 onsite computers, 15 servers, 15 switches, and numerous personal laptops and devices brought on campus.

David Chechat, IT technician at IUT, decided in 2010 that a completely physical server environment could pose some integrity and reliability risks in the long term. Virtualizing the system would not only secure data, reduce physical space, and increase efficiency and flexibility, it would also maximize the returns on hardware investment.

By using programs such as VMware ESXi, it would be possible for multiple applications and operating systems to be hosted on a single



At a Glance

■ Industry

Education

■ Location

France

■ Challenge

IUT de Valence needed a cost-effective and reliable solution for the backup and recovery of its virtualized servers.

■ Products and Services

Micro Focus VM Explorer

■ Success Highlights

- + Makes it possible for the institution to safely maximize its investments in server infrastructure with simple VM solution
- + Frees up IT resources to resolve more pressing IT challenges, such as networks and connectivity
- + Adapts to the organization's budget constraints with an affordable pricing model

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physical server, multiplying computing and storage capabilities at a low cost. However, virtualizing its infrastructure presented IUT with new technical and cost challenges.

“We started by virtualizing three servers with VMware ESXi, a move that allowed us to deliver fast and continuous services that fit users’ varying needs,” says Chechat. “But we ran into difficulties when our VMs needed moving, replicating, and backing up. It quickly became clear that our homemade solutions were actually time-consuming, costly, and exposed us to errors, bugs, and glitches. We needed the support of an expert solution.”

Solution

Testing and Learning with Ease

To address its data backup requirements, IUT first implemented VM Explorer in February 2010. The most immediate benefit of the software was the ease with which Chechat and his team were able to begin using it. They were particularly pleased to be able to download and test a free version of VM Explorer before committing to purchasing a full license.

“Thanks to our previous experience with the free version, setting up the first set of automated processes was a straightforward and simple process that only took a few minutes,” he says. “The tool efficiently does what it was designed to do, which makes it extremely easy for the IT team to learn how to program and schedule key tasks. The user-friendliness of the system also means potential new members of our team will have no trouble adapting to the system.”

Making Backups Reliable and Convenient

IUT de Valence now uses VM Explorer to back up six physical servers, containing 30 VMs. The software is used to perform weekly backups of 500 GB of data from half the VMs, as well as daily replications of around 10 VMs from one VMware machine to another. Each VM backup procedure has been automated using the Scheduler function within VM Explorer.

“The Scheduler function is one of the system’s greatest assets for a small team such as ours,” says Chechat. “Before VM Explorer, we would have to add our inefficient manual backup process to the list of daily IT tasks we had to complete during busy school weeks. Thanks to the new system, we can now devote more time and energy to more complex IT challenges.”

Results

Enabling Flexibility and Reactivity

A convenient all-in-one solution, VM Explorer is currently the only virtualization tool used for IUT’s virtual servers—a configuration that has made the IT team more reactive than before.

“It’s impossible to completely eliminate occasional crashes and system disruptions,” says Chechat. “But it is possible to reduce the impact they have on critical system functions. VM Explorer has allowed us to respond to interruptions in less than a couple of hours, whereas before we would have needed at least an entire day to get everything back on track.”

The efficiency of VM Explorer has also boosted staff productivity. “We do not have to worry about whether or not the system is working

as programmed,” he adds. “We can leave it to work in the background and focus our attention on other important tasks.”

Reducing Costs with Affordable Solutions

Another attractive feature of VM Explorer is its affordability.

“As a public academic institution, we do not have an unlimited access to resources. We essentially have to work with the most cost-effective solution that has a chance of getting approved,” says Chechat. “VM Explorer is an excellent product that fulfills both our varying technology needs and our constrained institutional budget. Considering how much more flexible and reactive we have become since implementing it, the new system has more than paid for itself.”